

# Woman's Union Missionary Society

## MORNING CALLS IN INDIA

By MISS S. F. GARDNER

IT has been the wish of one of my friends in America that we might go together to make morning calls in India. We take it for granted that she means on our native friends of Cawnpore; therefore we prepare to go with much pleasure! Would that in very reality every woman in the blessed home-land might spend a few mornings in the homes of India. How their hearts would go out toward the women in their sad, desolate lives. It would no longer be necessary to plead for help or workers!

But in India morning *means* morning, so I am here for you promptly at half-past five. It will not be necessary to make an elaborate toilet; but be sure you take your sun hat and umbrella, for you will not be able to get on without them, and a good stout stick to drive away the dogs. We will drive as far as the alley that leads to our first house, and then walk through to the court beyond. What is that bundle rolled up near the wall? That is somebody finishing his morning nap. It is a pity to awaken him or I would touch the roll to show you how quickly an apparently lifeless heap of rags may become animated. It reminds me of an incident which happened when I first came to India. Going out one day to a corner of the back veranda, and wishing to reach a nail above my

head I stepped upon something that I thought was a pile of matting, when suddenly the pile sat up and looked me in the face reproachfully. It was our night watchman, covered head and feet in the matting, taking his day-time sleep.

But here we are at the entrance of our first house, where lives a well-to-do family of Hindus, whom I have known for a long time. Their only son has just been married and the young bride is with his parents. Stay here in the court a minute and I will run inside and see if they are up, and while I am gone, just observe the carving on those doors, not common in Cawnpore. But here comes the new wife, who is a great favorite with her old mother-in-law. She looks a little sleepy this morning; is probably just up; that is her mother-in-law behind, a kind-hearted old lady, whom everybody loves, and her son is like her. The wife is never unkindly treated. Although much better off than many young wives, at first she was not quite happy in her new surroundings, for she came out of a family where there were seven children, and felt the change to this quiet house very keenly; but now we have been teaching her and she knows how to do various kinds of work, and her days pass very pleasantly and rapidly. Would you like to hear her read a chapter in her book of Bible stories and see the last pair of slippers she has made for her young husband? Bring them, Lakshmi, and show our American friend how well an Indian girl can read and sew who has only been taught one year. She reads her Bible too very intelligently, and often asks thoughtful questions.

Just opposite is another house where I will introduce you to three young girls, all married, though the oldest is not yet eighteen and the youngest only in her thirteenth year. There is a great difference between them and the fortunate pupil just visited, for their husbands are arbitrary and often cruel, and their mother-in-law not much less so, and their lives are sad and miserable. Until we came to teach

them, the youngest one spent most of her time in tears, but now she is interested in her books and is happier. Be careful going up the narrow stairway. We shall find them in the upper room waiting for their "Miss Sahib." The one with the red sari trimmed with gold, is the eldest, who always does the talking, if there is no one near of whom she is afraid. The next one is a very bright girl, and though she has only been reading with us six months, she can read any Hindi book that is put into her hands. The youngest is so shy that she will not uncover her face while a stranger is present; but she is a loving, lovable child. Their husbands are away at this time, and fortunately the mother-in-law, too, is engaged, so we shall be able to speak more freely with them. What would not they become in one of our good home schools? They have better voices for singing than many Indian women, and we will hear them sing one of their favorite hymns:

"Why should this world, this evil world, ensnare my evil heart;  
Hold fast thy soul and wisely spend of life this fleeting part."

Listen to the last verse:

"O blessed Christ! this sinful one thy servant ever would be;  
In heaven or earth no one have I; no one, O Christ, save thee!"

This hymn all the Indian women are very fond of, and they always sing it as if they meant it.

There is an old and feeble woman living a little farther down the alley. Ah! here she is, sitting in the sun outside her door. She wants to know who you are. And as I tell her, another lady who loves her, do you see what a pleasant light comes into her face at the thought? She says she believes in our Christ, and as far as she understands, I think she does.

Just opposite, in that little mud hut, lives a little hunch-back. She is very bright and intelligent, but with a weary, pathetic look in

her face that is sad to see. Everybody despises her because it is believed that she must have been very wicked in a former birth to be born this way. Yes, come in and sit down just a minute; it will give her and her aunt something to think about afterward.

Now, I am going to take you to the other side of the city. Just down that street is a dear, native lady, who became a Christian, but was shut in by her husband, so that we never see her any more. Over there is the new native church for Christians. At the dedication service the other day fifteen of our native women were there, behind a curtain, listening to the services. We have a school in this house, but we will go into the back of the house where the women are—a widow and her sons' wives, one of whom is a widow, also, and rigorously performs all the rites and duties that pertain to widowhood. That is she in the plain white dress, and shaven head. She does the work of the house, but they are not unkind to her. The old lady is asking us to sit down on the edge of the bed, and the other daughter is bringing her baby to show. Isn't he a splendid boy? and her first, so that she is very proud of him. The black rings around his eyes are put on to make them look larger. They enhance his beauty in his mother's eyes, but rather spoil it in ours. Her sister, the widow, is called Rani, which means a queen. She always reminds me of a young lady I know in America. Good and gentle, and always anxious to do her duty just as far as she understands it. By and by when she grasps the truth of Christianity what a lovely Christian she will make.

Her sister, the baby's mother, is never tired of examining the stranger's costume, and wants to know if those high boots do not hurt your feet, and if it is not warm to wear those things on your hands. Perhaps you might truthfully answer "Yes" to both questions, and if you lived here dispense with them.

We will not go into this place on the other side of the alley, but



just look in at the door and say salaam to the kind-faced woman grinding behind that partition.

This little girl in the next doorway has heard of us, and is begging us to see her sisters and mother. "No, little Fahiman, we cannot go in to-day, as I saw your family yesterday, but we will give you this picture instead." She is a little Mohammedan and very fond of pictures, of which she has a long row on the wall, and delights to add a new one at every opportunity.

You must see one of my dearest friends among the Indian women. Her house is next to a temple over there, and she is coming to meet us. She is not high caste, but goes out of her house into this court, but no farther. She has the loveliest spirit that I ever met. She does not *say* she is a Christian, but I think is a good deal nearer to it than some who profess to be. She begs us to come in and sit a while, and wants to give us some sweetmeats, for that is an especial favor that Indian women pay their guests. When I am tired of everything and everybody else I come here and sit a while; and though the surroundings do not look very inviting to a stranger, yet I assure you I always come away refreshed. But now I must take you home. It is too late for you to be out any longer in the heat. Will you go again another day? My visiting list is very large. I could take you for many days and not exhaust it. My only reward shall be that you promise to think about those you visit, and make them your friends as they are mine.

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Such is the work in India of the missionaries of the WOMAN'S UNION MISSIONARY SOCIETY, an independent organization of women formed in 1860. The stations are in Calcutta, Allahabad, Cawnpore and Jhansi, where thousands of zenana women are under instruction. Two Orphanages have rescued hundreds of little girls, and a

Hospital at Jhansi is provided for sick women who have no other medical care in that populous district. We want your interest. Send for the MISSIONARY LINK, the organ of the Society, that you may hear more of the work. Subscription, 50 cents. Club rates, 30 cents.

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